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Ex-RAF Pilot Says CIA Work Is Fun— But Don't Get Caught

FORT LAUDERDALE, June 22 (AP)—A goateed former stunt pilot for the Royal Air Force says working for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency can be profitable and fun.

But if you get caught, says John Hawke, "it tends to get tiresome."

Hawke, 28, is awaiting trial on charges of conspiring to fly seven renovated B26 bombers from the United States to Portugal last year without an export license and without written approval from the State Department.

Hawke acknowledges that he flew the planes. He says he made a tidy profit. But he insists he violated no law because he was working for the CIA.

"I was briefed at a variety of stages by men who I am satisfied were CIA agents," Hawke says.

As proof, he points out that

flying team, for eight years before coming to this country, before the reason he is on the spot is the United States' stated policy of noninterference in Africa.

The planes, he says, were bound for Portuguese Angola, which was threatened with a serious insurrection.

"If they (the United States) admitted, tacitly or otherwise, that I was working for the CIA, there would be real trouble at the U.N.," Hawke says.

Hawke says he flew the first seven planes to Portugal with no trouble, taking off from airports at Boston, Detroit, Rochester and Washington. He says he was paid \$3,000 per plane and got what was left over after fuel, maintenance and return fare to Tucson, Ariz., where he was living at the time.

That amounted to \$600 to \$700

he took off from various U.S. cities for the illegal flights to Portugal simply by passing along the words "Sparrow" and "Hawk."

Once, he says, he accidentally flew through a forbidden corridor over the White House.

"When I landed I was interviewed by all sorts of little men in black suits," Hawke says. "But nothing came of it. You have to admit that's something when a plane with a functioning bomb bay and armor plate can get away with that."

Hawke and four other men were indicted for conspiracy in Buffalo, N.Y., last Oct. 8. U.S. Atty. John Curtin says the trial will not begin until July at the earliest. He dismisses Hawke's story.

"In these kinds of cases, it seems this kind of defense will be used more and more," he says.

Hawke, who flew for the RAF's Firebirds, a precision

per plane for about five months between May and September 1965, he says. Projected plans called for 36 planes, he says.

The trouble began in September when a customs inspector at Rochester noticed a supply of gunsights, gunmounts, bombsights and empty ammunition cans in a C46 cargo plane.

Hawke says he passed along the words "Hawk" and "Sparrow" and was allowed to take off. Customs agents say he stopped at Ocala, Fla., and dropped off the cargo before flying to Miami.

The next day, Hawke says, he noticed a man following him around Fort Lauderdale where he now lives with his British wife, Jean, in a small, expensively furnished home.

At first, he says he was afraid it might be "the other side." But as the days passed, Hawke says he became friendly

with his shadow and would wave at him.

On Sept. 16, he says he asked his "tail" to help him carry some groceries in after a trip to the supermarket. Hawke says he and the shadow even sat down to a beer. A few minutes later four companions from the U.S. Treasury Department arrived and arrested Hawke.

"There have been some amusing moments," says Hawke, who is doing some charter and cargo flying while awaiting the trial, "but now I would like to get it over. It tends to get tiresome."

The four other men who were indicted with Hawke were Gregory Board, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Australia; Count Henri De Montmarin, a French importer-exporter; Keat Griggs, a Jamestown, Calif., aircraft mechanic who was aboard the C46; and Woodrow Roderick, a Canadian.

U.S. Atty. Curtin says this is what happened:

Board, who has fled the country and the only one not arrested, contracted to purchase 20 B26s from Hamilton Aircraft Co. of Tucson, which agreed to put them in shape. Board was to sell them to Roderick as executive aircraft.

Instead, the money for the planes came from a Swiss firm, Lunbar S.A., with Montmarin handling the arrangements.

Customs agents says Roderick has admitted to them that he knew the planes were for use overseas.

Testimony at a May hearing in Buffalo revealed that the planes were flown from Portugal to France where their piston engines were exchanged for more powerful turbo prop engines.

Curtin says the planes' destination beyond that point was not known.



Hawke with Collection of Model Planes